

STILL MY WORLD



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/ Sergeant Leonard Foulk



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This story is the contribution to the guide dog movement in the United States,—of a veteran of World War II, who was blinded in the Battle of Attu. He believes he found the most rapid and satisfying solution to some of his problems of newly blindedness.

It is published solely in the hope that other blind who want a quick method of adjustment,—and those who,—like Sergeant Foulk,—find this method suitable and desirable,—may take courage in the fact that a long interval of time is unnecessary before finding themselves returned to their own normal surroundings of life and home.

It is hoped that all who read this may find the vital facts here presented as intensely exhilarating and worthy of consideration as we have found them to be.

PUBLISHERS.

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Date
Feb. 1946.

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STILL MY WORLD

by

SGT. LEONARD M. FOULK

and

"C. W."

San Francisco, California, 1945
Printed by PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE PRESS, Angwin, Calif.

“Nobody ever finds life worth living.
One always must make it worth living.”
—*Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick.*

To
All those who have returned blinded
from action in World War II.

John Milton wrote, when blindness shut the world from his dramatic soul,—

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Charles Magee Adams, in his article "This Business of Being Blind," says,—

"The blind man's mental world is simply one devoid of sight and its vicarious equivalent. A strange eerie place? Only because it is different from the seeing norm—"

Nothing has changed. Everything is just as it was before, only you can't see.—

(Sgt. Leonard Foulk's reaction in the 7th week of adjustment.)

Blindness is an incident in an otherwise normal life and not that life's objective.

The first and most important step is to allow the newly blinded to once again become the normal active being he was prior to his blindness: not to instruct him on how to become a model blind man.—"C. W."

FOREWORD

It is not to be assumed I think my experience is anything unique from that of other War Blind. This book is not an attempt to set forth a personality as an example of something different. It is a sincere attempt to show one man's experience during World War II. Many blind have done more brilliant things and added standards of high endeavor and pursuit for the benefit of blinded mankind than what is to be found here, but it is fair to believe that no blind casualty from World War II need feel in bondage to his blindness for want of an answer to "What to Do?"

I firmly believe in the program which was laid out for me, and although I was fully aware there are other schools of thought regarding the adjustment and rehabilitation of the newly War Blind, I, personally, am glad I was not asked to subscribe to any reconditioning and rehabilitation that does not put the newly blinded casualty back into circulation the immediate moment wounds have healed and dismissal from regimentation is possible. If the casualty goes back into the world from which he came—no matter what that former life may have been—and if he can avoid the process of too much synthetic morale building, he will not have too much time to think and too little time to be "up and at it." For, unless he is interested in being a model blind man, he will not want to sit and wait for something to happen; he will not care to make blindness his main objective in life, and will not dwell on "self" as blind. On the contrary, he will begin to consider his blindness like the battle in which he last saw the light of day—but an incident outside his blindness.

In my case I could have grown tired very early during

my convalescence of isolation—being away from people and the life I knew before. When my injuries had healed I wanted to be put back into civilian circulation and the environment from which I had come. To me the outside world spelled trains, paved highways, concrete streets and familiar sounds of traffic. It did not then, and does not now, seem to be important how much of a model blind man I might become. I was not ready at that time for further coordinated training and discipline,—no matter how slight by slow groping, sit-down processes of learning, which dwelt upon a mental readjustment rather than physical freedom and quick dismissal from regimentation.

The story that follows will show the process by which I believe I gained an adequate and a fast adjustment—from battle field to civilian life in seven weeks.

LEONARD M. FOULK.

FOREWORD

The photographs in this book were placed there at my suggestion and with the permission of Mr. Foulk.

“C. W.”



“THE RIDGE AT ATTU”

Passed by Base 1709 Army Examiner

CHAPTER ONE

Landing

Our troops of the 7th Division hustled on to the shore, while large naval craft stood by in the background. ATTU—the harikari of Japanese ambitions on the north road to Tokyo—.

I was so dreadfully seasick that I swore if ever I got my feet on that island, there wouldn't be enough Japs to put me off.

Our first news came from the engineers who were right on the beach, and they told us the Japs were about one-half mile inland.

My equipment was as follows: A carbine rifle, 10 rounds of 60 millimeter, pack, binoculars, 90 rounds carbine, one day's K. rations, wool underwear (tops and bottoms), high leather boots, heavy O.D. field jacket.

The officer said, "See that mountain—climb it as fast as you can!" We started to climb just as we got off the boat, which was about 9 a.m. The engineers had already hauled all the equipment up the hill on a sled. We walked up to where it was and unloaded it, and then started inland.

We met some more of our men—also some Jap snipers. We then walked for two hours. At this point we stopped and reorganized our Company, and laid around a while. (First box of K. Rations.)

At 2 p.m. orders came to attack! We walked another half mile, along the side of a gully, till we reached a high ridge. Just prior to reaching the ridge, they threw artillery fire down on us. One boy, fifty feet away, had his pack straps ripped off, from the concussion—it also broke off his

rifle stock. We were lying flat on the ground—snow was on the ground—it was cold and wet, and we were hungry. We stayed there all that night. (Some more K. Rations.) About midnight we posted sentries, while the rest of us tried to get some sleep. We rolled up in our shelter half, and about 3 a.m. got up, and stayed up. I tried to stand up and couldn't—didn't feel cold, but thought I was sick. I'd get up, and fall down again. Finally, I told a buddy next to me, "I can't walk." He said, "I'm the same way—it's just the damned cold." It was light (summer light), as it was daylight until midnight, and all that day we laid on that hill until 1 p.m. (Another K. Ration.) From about 8 that same day until 1 or 2, we were pinned down by the enemy's artillery fire. About 2 o'clock we moved out of our positions, down a long, steep slope, and circled right in by Holtz Bay, which brought us directly into the enemy's camp. At about 4 or 5 p.m. we had more K. Rations. At this point we found blankets, food, dry stocks, wool sweaters and fur-lined gloves left there by the Japs. We stuck Old Glory up in the dirt, built fires, stayed there all that night, and dug into positions on the adjoining ridge, right by us. We had 6 or 8 heavy machine guns, firing final protective lines, to our front all night. Meantime, the navy was firing out at sea—probably on enemy surface units.

Next morning, at nine, our artillery shelled the ridge to our front. We had six P-38's and two or three Gruman Wild Cats (navy planes) strafing the enemy positions, and bombing all the time. This continued until about five or six o'clock. At 8 p.m. we had orders to move up the ridge which we had been shelling and strafing all that day. We moved up there after a hard, steep climb, arriving at the top about midnight. It was dark when we reached our destination. We dug in our positions, and posted our guards. It was too bitterly cold to sleep. We remained

here in our positions until daylight, at which time we made a reconnaissance, but, when we didn't find any Japs, we sent a detail back down to the beach. They brought up wood from ammunition crates. Meantime, the kitchen moved up and cooked us some hot food, which was brought up to us also, and tasted mighty good. We built fires, "ate chow" and dried out until four that afternoon. About 4 p.m. we had orders to move to the extreme right flank, and to dig in and hold positions, which were completed by 8 p.m. We had more hot rations brought up to us. All we did then was to sit around, smoke cigarettes, tell stories and make hot coffee.

We kept positions all that night, and all the next day until 6 o'clock in the evening, when orders came to move out and take positions on the mountain. We moved out, crossed a stream by wading up to our knees in ice water and reached the base of this mountain about 9 p.m. About 9 we started to climb the mountain, scaling it by 3 a.m. We then dug into positions again. Nothing happened, except we nearly froze to death.

We remained on watch all that day. About 4 p.m. our troops on our extreme left started to close in on a flat, between two mountain ridges. These troops moved up close to the Japanese camouflaged machine guns, which had been there all day. These guns were camouflaged so well we couldn't pick them up, but when the troops on our left advanced, they came so close to them it forced the enemy to open fire, which, in turn, exposed them to us—and I saw them immediately (if not sooner). When they exposed themselves, no one was able to pick them up as quickly as I did, except one other soldier, who had the only other pair of binoculars besides mine. I was, at this time, kneeling in a foxhole, and looking through the binoculars, telling the machine gunner and a B.A.R. man where to fire, as I could see them clearly, but they could not—with

the naked eye—until I pointed them out. This I did, passing the binoculars to the machine gunner; and while I fired the machine gun, I told him to watch the tracers. He knew then exactly where they were, and returned the glasses to me, and went back to his machine gun. I took the binoculars and continued to observe the enemy positions, when — Bang! a bullet knocked me down, and I was through—. The shot, in addition to knocking me down, shattered my binoculars, as well as my eyes, and pierced the end of my thumb. At this point, I was stretched out beside the machine gunner, believing I soon would be a dead doggie. My buddy came along,—gave me 24 grams Sulfadizene tablets, and water out of his canteen, dressed my head, and rolled me in a blanket.

The battle of Attu ended about 24 hours later.

CHAPTER TWO

Homeward Bound

After being placed in a sleeping bag, my buddies slid me down the mountain-side, at the foot of which we met the medics. This brought me to the Aid station, and more dressings. I was then loaded into a jeep and sent to the field hospital, where, after more dressings and the elimination of some shrapnel and stray parts of my binoculars from my head wounds, I remained for five days, waiting for transportation for the journey home,—which we made by tractor-trailer and ship. On the ship, I was operated upon, when it was found necessary to remove my right eye. The outcome of this operation was most successful, which forcefully proved to me that our ships are equipped with expert personnel. I later found that the most modern technique had been used.

Twelve days later I arrived at Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. It was dinner time, I recall, when we were at last placed in our wards, and I felt a sense of comfort and a certain joy about this particular destination, with creature comforts in abundance and the routine care of nurses and doctors,—all this, in spite of the fact I knew I could not see.

The doctors at Letterman were especially sympathetic and understanding of my needs, and it was under these physicians that I was to receive further medical attention. Again I knew I was in skilled hands, and each day appreciated more the personal interest they showed me, realizing Uncle Sam was giving me the best of results through their efforts and skill.

The first weeks of routine were, for the most part,

dressings, sleep and food. I felt pretty good about the thing, and settled down to rest in a ward, amid other serious casualties from the same battle front. "At least," I thought, "this is the United States," and, strange as it may seem, I wasn't depressed. I felt in my heart partially contented, but secretly, I wanted to get well of my injuries, and longed for my subsequent discharge. I knew, as far as the war was concerned, the jig was up for me. I took blindness, at this two weeks' period, as an accepted every-day thing, and knew, from the moment I was wounded, I was permanently blinded.

I did not suffer much pain; my injured thumb, pained me more than my eyes at that time, because the greatest pain seemed centered there. It soon healed, and is now a perfect thumb.

I slept a good deal those first days, but during visiting hours various personalities would drop by my bedside, and the other boys would wander into the ward and chat. At first, sleep came and went, and I began to cat-nap at will, sleeping days and staying awake nights, with no particular reason or desire to get out of bed. It seemed all right just to remain undisturbed in bed. In fact, I preferred it since I could not see to get about.

In a few days it was suggested that I accept the services of a Braille instructor. She came each day to teach me this lace work script, and was so patient and kind in explaining my lessons, and some experiences of her own blindness. I was indifferent to Braille at this point, and, though I tried to be otherwise, it was much too soon for me to stir myself toward anything of an educational or vocational nature. My future did not worry me half as much as the immediate forthcoming days. I was one of those who had left the farm to join the army, and I had never had vocational job experience. Consequently, I found it difficult to enthuse over the courses or crafts sug-

gested. I had one desire, and one desire alone, which was to get out of the army as soon as ever I could and return to my home, where I had not been for four years. I could not find pleasure in anything that might now be asked of me if it meant one day's delay in obtaining the thing I desired most.

One day the doctor brought to my bedside a personality whom I will refer to as C.W. (Case Worker). Naturally, people were just personalities with names, but no dimensions, and one did not seem much more important than another, especially on first meeting. She sat down and opened up a conversation of small talk, which struck me instantly as pleasant enough, but I was not too interested. She inquired about my head wounds, for at that time I was quite bandaged in pretty much of a patched-quilt manner. She said she guessed meeting me face to face would be after the strip tease technique—"a little at a time." I complained of my bandages to her and, as I did so, thumped my head, saying, "It feels as though my head were in a vise." She, too, began tapping my head, and added humorously—"I can't feel anything except it sounds like wood to me!" She did not remain long that day, but, upon leaving, quietly asked, "Would you like me to return tomorrow? For if it is half the pleasure for you to have me as it is for me to come, I will?" I told her to come back next day, though maybe I was only trying to be polite. We agreed, however, on the time, and she kept her word to the minute.

From even that first short meeting I thought she had some kind of a plan in her mind, and I believed from her conversation it was some sort of an adjustment program. From then on she came every day, and soon I became anxious to get on with such a plan, because I felt it spelled freedom for me, and would get me started along the line of things I wanted to do most.

CHAPTER THREE

Beginning My Second Week

It was time for "C.W." to arrive, and, by now, our routine had been established. I could plan a busy day each day. She was always punctual and sometimes would not greet me audibly but move to my bedside in order to see if I had recognized her coming by her footsteps. Often she would move to my bed silently to see if I was practicing alertness—not just letting things go by me. She wanted to catch me in any mental laziness I might indulge in.

We had discussed getting me out of bed, but, until now, I was slow in wanting to even walk. This day she sat quietly by my bed. By now the other boys in the adjoining two beds were getting well acquainted with her, and they were included in our conversation and jokes. I asked her if the sun was shining outside. She told me it certainly was—that a cool breeze was helping to make it a perfect walking day. She asked if I wouldn't like to be out in it. I suddenly had a desire to go, but she suggested we wait until the next day, as I was only in hospital pajamas. This wait made me eager to walk, and so I was outfitted in proper regulation walking shoes and convalescent suit. The following day we began to walk. We did not go far at first, since I had not stepped forth into space and darkness yet,—and it was a strange thing to do. She kept my mind off this strangeness by her demands, kindly given but firmly impressed on my mind: "Chin up,—chest out,—and shoulders back."

She read to me from an article by Lieut. Comdr. Gene Tunny, U.S.N.R., author of "Arms for Living": "Physical flabbiness has always seemed to me a criminal, even sac-

rileigious abuse of that wonderful instrument, the human body. Even since boyhood I've made a religion of keeping in shape, by regular conscientious exercise. Adhering to a high ideal of stamina and endurance, has paid me dividends, not only in the prize ring, but in the almost equally gruelling struggle of everyday life. The man who has allowed his body to deteriorate cuts a pitiful figure. The proper body carriage conserves the energy that postural defects drain away."

We continued to walk every day, and once, I said in reply to her reminder—"chin up,"—"but my chin is up." Then she stopped me and measured with her fingers from my chest to my chin, and lightly moved my chin upwards—"Oh, that feels exaggerated," I told her. But it was normal. I had dropped my head just by the weight of blindness—which can be mighty heavy at first. She told me she had seen many blind, who practically rested their chins on their chests, not realizing this incorrect posture makes them appear dejected, when, perhaps in reality, they may possess very joyous spirits.

The first few days I hung onto the arm of my case worker, and almost dragged my feet. Soon she had me lead her, since I had learned to walk well enough for this, and she pushed me away slightly while we simply touched each other's little fingers—swinging our arms freely back and forth like pendulums. One day she told me it was nonsense for us to touch even our little fingers. "Listen for my steps and follow me," she said. The first time we came to a turn in the road (we were walking the graveled roads of the Government Post) I continued straight on, until I heard her laugh, and say—"Might you be going my way, sir?" I realized I was no longer walking beside her, because the wind carried away the sound of her footsteps on the gravel, or, perhaps, I stopped listening and took for granted she was by my side. However, at any slight

depression under foot, she touched me, in order that fear would not set into my thinking by continued or habitual miscalculation of my footsteps, as I walked. Miscalculations of all kinds are emotional "upsets," especially at first and I was not permitted to endure needless shocks and their subsequent emotions. These first walking steps were the true foundation of my present firm step. She insisted always that my footsteps be firm, never faltering. In reaching curbs, she stopped, as a guide dog would, and said, "Juno, stop!" Scarcely knowing it, and always without interrupting our conversation, I learned to raise my foot sufficiently high to come down comfortably on the walk.

(Now, after one and one-half year's time—my first year and a half in total darkness*—I can say with calm deliberation that the most important thing during the whole of that time was the opportunity offered me to walk many, many miles, beginning with the fourteenth day of my blindness (with bandages still on),—out into the great outdoors—unfettered—without cane or canine, but learning to walk *fast* on my own two feet—even sometimes alone, when safety permitted. It was important I learn the city noises, though confusing, as I came and went in street-cars, taxicabs, into hotels, cafes and places where people congregated to laugh, to sing and dance. These things were not closed to me, and I believed it was my world again.)

Charles Magee Adams in his article "This Business of Being Blind" writes:

"Of all the perceptive skills the sightless develop the one most difficult for the seeing to understand is orientation. . . .

"In all fairness it must be said that some of the blind have added to the confusion by fostering the myth of the

*This book, in manuscript was written and circulated in Sept. 1943.

'sixth sense.' There is no such thing. The faculty of orientation is just another adaptive skill developed by combining normal senses to do a special job."

"C.W." understood the training of a guide dog, and the practical method of incorporating this knowledge into our daily walks. Dogs walk at the rate of three miles per hour on the straightaway. I soon felt an abandon and freedom to walk endlessly. It seemed that nothing could stop me now.

The first week of this I said to "C.W." "I could walk this way for miles!" She would laughingly taunt me by saying, "I couldn't—here's that bench again."

She walked me into hazards, both below and overhead and always in unfamiliar places stopping when obstacles were approached. I would have to make my semi-circle with my right hand to the side, then above and below, until I discovered the hazard or obstacle she intended I should find and avoid.

At first the motions of my hands were quick. This, I soon was shown, could be injurious to my arms, wrists, hands or fingers. Often, she would say, "Be gentle with that hazard, and graceful. Your hands can express your desire to know your surroundings as easily by the graceful way you discern the surrounding space as well as by a clumsy method. Such 'blindisms' as tapping, thumping, batting the air and all impetuous nervous motion would, in time, turn you into a fretting, emotionally unsound disagreeable nature and person."

These are the bad habits of blindness, and are no more necessary than crude, caustic speech is necessary to gentleness of individuals. I soon learned that motion like that can be gentle in action, and instead of announcing to the world how blind a man I was, I was made to do everything with a kind of grace, which, I must admit, was a new routine from the soldier ordered to "climb that mountain

as fast as you can," heavily weighted down with a pack.

By this time I was in my second week of adjustment work, and the days were flying. I looked forward secretly to the hour each day the case worker was due. I was like a child waiting to play and totally disinterested in learning anything of a scholastic nature at this very early date of my darkness.

(As I see it now, it is of great importance to work at being happy those first months, and year. I found routine advice on how to become a successful blind man not much of a morale builder at this early stage of my blindness.)

I caught my first glimpse of what life could be, perhaps, if only tomorrow—(and "there is always tomorrow,"—I thought), "I can play again." My play was just the simple experience of walking, baring my face against the breezes which came in from the Golden Gate and the Pacific Ocean just beyond.

(Even then I was ceasing to make my handicap my chief interest in life—though I may not have realized it at that time.)

Many times came the orders, "Chin up—shoulders back—chest out. Swing your arms and drink in that fresh cool air." Soon I began to think in terms of these quantities, until one day I exclaimed, "Oh, how nice that air feels against my face!" My world of touch was beginning, normally and naturally.

On one of our days in our second week together, "C.W.," without telling me, began to coordinate my hearing with my fast walking. She said, "Now today you are going to do the talking, while I'm going to listen to what you say you see." We passed a gardener, watering a lawn with a spray nozzle—easily recognized. Next I told her "I'll bet that's a convoy of army trucks going by."—It was.

Soon we heard the sound of steel against pipe. I told her someone must be playing "horse shoes." She laughed

outright at this. "Now, Leonard, up until now I was willing to believe you, but I'm afraid you are daydreaming, and perhaps dreaming of down on the farm in Illinois on a lazy Sunday afternoon." We walked on farther, and she said, "I do not see what you see—it's my guess someone is cleaning out a work shop, and throwing away bits of pipe." Suddenly we stopped, and there we stood where two boys were throwing "horse shoes,"—and it wasn't a lazy Sunday afternoon in Illinois either. Inwardly I chuckled at my own observations, and suddenly realized how much I took for granted, or did not bother to observe in my everyday sighted world.

"Over there is a large, shiny, yellow truck, and if it wasn't so bulky I would let you hug it," she said, knowing my love for machinery, to say nothing of motor-driven things. Just then the driver started his motor, and I told her "It's an International." She ran over to see, returning, with the remark, "of all things—it is!"

This seemed like a red-letter day, as we walked briskly back toward my ward and sat down on our accustomed bench, to recapitulate the many things there are to think about in a seemingly dark world begun not so many days ago.

"C.W." promised to return next day. When she told me she would arrive at 2 p.m. I always knew she would. She explained—"We never tell the blind we will do a thing and not do it." One day she was unavoidably late, and could only stay 15 minutes. I told her it would be all right if she failed me this once. "All right for you, perhaps, but not for my own discipline," she said. "We try never to disappoint a *newly* blinded person. Confidence can only be established by always keeping our word. With blindness, sometimes comes a question of a doubt. When so much must be believed by word alone, we must be careful! Not all people weigh their words of confidence when

dealing with the blind. Substituting fiction for fact in everyday things will not help to build courage in the blind, and often starts a cross-fire of confused mental disturbances, which may in time warp an otherwise sound and trusting perspective. Suspicion must be eliminated early and at any cost." Little beginnings of distrust may easily turn the newly blinded into "problem children" through no fault of their own.

Frequently we were run off, by the M.P.'s, from areas not intended for Army Hospital convalescent suits. One day I discovered she had me sitting on a bench in the Brig. General's back yard, and we were pulling leaves from his garden shrubs. In particular, some green berries from a pepper tree. She insisted I tell her what tree, if any, we had in Illinois that might resemble the same, by sense of touch or smell.

All our time was taken up by our talking, sometimes humorously and impressively, about my world. She urged silent rest at intervals, because long periods of concentrated attention by means of touch and sound produce mental weariness, which in turn results in limited discouragement. During some of our quiet times she often read to me from the best and most modern writers in blind psychology.

She brought up the subject of my hands. I said I didn't want my hands to look like a girl's. She answered, "I suppose you would rather have them as once on the farm." I told her the mere mention of "farm" made me happy. She then quoted from Charles Magee Adam's article, "The Business of Being Blind"—"Touch is the sense whose usefulness is most overrated often by the blind themselves, and certainly by the seeing. Its sensitivity depends in large measure on the condition of the skin. Perspiration, dust, callouses or numbing cold, can be as deadly as an eye cataract. This explains why some of the blind are fastidious about the care of their hands."

CHAPTER FOUR

I Begin to Learn

Learning to be blind is not without its humor, if properly filed away in the archives of the mind. Each day presents a new challenge, and, because we both had relatively the same quality of humor, we laughed a lot from the start—in fact, never once was I allowed to actually know just how many eyes were watching me as we went about the large city, in taxicabs, street cars, crossings, curbs, circular revolving doors and elevators—to say nothing of store aisles, miles long, with bargain tables to poke me amidships as we sailed through. I was not told I was being observed, hence went about with a complete freedom and abandon, unnoticed, as far as I knew. Nor was I allowed for a moment to consider my war blindness as a calamity to feel sorry about, but rather as a challenge to get down to the business of carrying on as fast as I could. If it was normal to expect a long and apathetic adjustment period, this was cast out of my thinking with the constant reminder—“let’s do it now—you can—why wait?”

(In looking back now to those first weeks, I see even more clearly how important this type of program was for me. Physically, I was in good health—except for my sightlessness—and when the remark was made in my presence that it was not necessary to punish my body because of my eyes, I was more than willing to accept my good state of health and “carry on.”)

My first verbal expression of “can’t” was quickly over-ridden when I went to the Post Exchange to cash a check which I had that day received. The young lady behind the teller’s wicket did not observe apparently that I could

not see. She said "Please endorse here." Turning to "C.W." I said, "I can't—you sign it and I'll make a cross after it." "What do you mean," "C.W." said with firmness, "of course you can sign it. Do you expect to go about all the rest of your life making crosses on your business letters? Nonsense! Here, take this pen, and this card will serve as a guide line." Laughingly, she added, "Lucky you—all of the letters in your signature are above the line—none below." So I signed my name, the first time, standing in the Post Exchange. The clerk remarked, in a kind way, "If all the signees signed their names as legibly as this our troubles would be fewer." I felt she wished this to be a word of encouragement and accepted it as such, thus stimulating my own pride. As we walked away, "C.W." said: "Let us sit here and count your money with care and place it in your new wallet"—the old wallet was badly warped. It had seen action in that Attu foxhole, and it, too, bore service marks. With one twenty-dollar bill, two tens, one five and five dollars in small currency,—fifty dollars in all—I was shown how to fold the money in the blind manner, at the same time being advised to use banks for any large amounts of exchange, for safety. The one dollar bills were to be placed flat in one section of the bill fold; the five dollar bill was folded once across, which approximated a square; the tens were folded lengthwise, once, which made them long and narrow, and the twenty was folded four times across, then arranged in the wallet the most convenient way. Change of silver is easy, since dimes and quarters are corrugated on the edges—pennies and nickels are smooth-edged. Half dollars and dollars are known by their sizes. From then on I had no difficulty in making change. Walking back to the ward I discovered I had no matches, so we stopped some of the other casualties on the walk who gave me a "light." They chatted with me, and, as we



SERGEANT FOULK RECEIVING PURPLE HEART FROM
COMMANDING GENERAL AT LETTERMAN GENERAL
HOSPITAL ON 24TH DAY OF BLINDNESS

went on, one of them said, "So long now—don't let them give you any wooden nickels!" "I'll try not to"—I laughed back. Trust the boys to convey their words of courage in such a way as to make one feel they still were your buddies.

By this third week I was finding my world, and looking for the humor in it. That afternoon we went on one of our expeditions into town. My personal appearance was receiving considerable attention by "C.W."—who stressed it continuously.

My hands, my posture! And, by now, the war ribbons were beginning to seem important to me. When I arrived at Letterman I came in what the well-dressed casualty was wearing that season—a pair of hospital pajamas. Then my wardrobe was augmented by the red convalescent suit, initialed in hospital letters on the pockets. I was about to be issued a new army suit, and we became very fussy as to details—the fit of the coat, my shoes, and what overseas ribbons I was entitled to wear. In fact, we devoted one or two mornings to "dude-ing" me up, and much fun was made over my two valets (orderlies). In town the nice new army shoes received their first polish, when we climbed up into a street bootblack stand, just as I had done all my life. Next, I wondered if my overseas cap was tricky enough, and decided to purchase a garrison cap. We found exactly the dark color I wanted. When the man brought the change, "C.W." walked toward the door, as she explained later, so the clerk would be forced to place the change in my hands, and not turn to her, as though I was helpless.

(In themselves these incidents seem small and unimportant, but it must be remembered these things were taking place in a totally darkened world for me. No daylight was lighting the way. Getting accustomed to voices coming out of the nowhere from all directions, and walk-

ing about in this eerie world was an adventure for me. It was an important adventure too, because I was circulating back into civilian life at this period—when actually I was only a few days blinded—and finding myself once again outside of my own blindness.)

So many new ideas, which never enter a sighted person's mind, are constantly taking form in a mind so recently called upon to replace the eyes. Much has been written about the blind, but gradually I was to realize, that just as I was an individual prior to my blindness, I would insist upon remaining an individual. It was pointed out to me that if it was what I most desired, certainly it was what I had a right to have.

When first approached, in the third week of my blindness, by the suggestion that I begin and study toward a vocational and occupational adjustment in an atmosphere of group training, I became morbidly depressed. This brought forth, in my mind's eye, nothing to stimulate my imagination, and I felt even more trapped. I had not yet recognized what I wanted—much less, what was even best for me. By nature not a nervous person, at this early stage of my darkness these suggestions caused me to tremble with more fear than when ordered to climb that mountain on Attu. I contemplated, from what I was told of the organized grouping of my life by others—in the guise of good—that this would continue to regiment me into what was thought best for me. Discussing my reaction with others, a new hope seemed to come into my thoughts when I was told I was not in bondage to anything, that I could free myself from human suggestions that did not cause happy reactions, since there was time ahead for these things. Sightlessness seemed bondage enough, and I had the same world to conquer as before I was blind, only now my methods of adjustment would be different. I had a whole lifetime before me to set my educational or voca-

tional house in order—if that was what I wanted. But I figured it out myself, in my long hours of thinking, that for my needs I wanted to get back into business, and I had no time to lose. If I was to think of myself in business I must believe in myself as sighted and make haste in my activity to get out of the army—on my feet—getting over the ground in the fastest possible way—win, draw or lose.

Of course, the Government is constantly at work to improve the vocational and occupational program for its disabled. This program is to fit the type of disablement, when the men desire it. In the case of the war blind, there will be many of us who will want vocational rehabilitation to coordinate with plans, according to what our life ambitions were prior to our signing up for war service, or being drafted into same. A few short weeks does not change a man to such an extent that he becomes—even though handicapped—an individual with no mind of his own, or personal ideas of where he wants to carry on from here. According to Milton H. Klem, who states in his article "Personal Adjustment of the Adult Blind"—"The tendency on the part of the sighted, to consider the blind as a group, has had disastrous effects on the lives of all the blind. They have either had to conform to the pattern in which society attempted to mould them or they had to rebel against it. The Case Worker must approach the problem of any blind (student) without a preconceived notion of the adjustment that the (student) will or ought to be able to make."

Daily we walked, walked, walked, always stressing freedom and weight movement, at our three miles an hour speed. Always—"Chin up!" Often when I felt caged and thwarted—alone in the dark—"C.W." would appear for that brisk, fast walk, and swinging my arms back and forth—even to the point of exaggeration—would, for the

time at least, loosen me mentally and physically. Soon my days were turned into days of eager anticipation and constructive achievement, and at nightfall I was weary for sleep in my hospital bed, alongside of the other boys.

In a short time I began to realize how true were Milton Klem's words, as quoted above. Many truths were read to me frequently, from the best writers on the subject, and soon I knew I should attempt to make my own adjustment in terms of my own feelings about myself—and what I thought was my short cut to what was still my world. I did not want to be treated as though I had no individuality of my own,—or that I was a “problem” needing mass segregation in order to fulfill my life's requirements,—simply because I could not see. I thought my way through from this premise to other ideas of freedom. I began to again meet people back in my sighted world as I forgot to remember my blindness. I find a keen interest in these questions of adjustment among others of my war comrades who have also become blind, of whom I have met quite a few. I must hear, first-hand, all there is in a fast moving world, and anything tedious and blank seems unendurable. If I could change my timing in convalescence from tedious waiting for something to happen, to immediate happiness in action, I could be happy. I had been trained, but a few weeks before, to regard possible injury, or even death, as something that might come to me, and also knew pretty much, when the war was over, what I wanted to do in life. I began to meet many kind sighted persons, whose vision was acceptable to me, whose intelligence was fresh as the morning sun, but which I could not see, and each day added new friends to the list. Here again I felt my sighted world return. The idea of living in my world again would inspire me to hurry on in my climbing to do things important to my immediate future. I had nothing in common with synthetic cheerfulness—

which wears on the blind and sighted alike. I wanted to avoid any emotions that could turn me into a future neurotic, since each day it was pointed out to me that I had been spared my brain—even though by a hair's breadth—and possessed a good physical body, and certainly I was grateful not to have been buried under frozen tundra, where some of my brave comrades are now, on Attu.

These thoughts would repeat themselves at night, as I lay waiting for sleep to come. Each new day my Case Worker would come, and I felt a desire to be constantly active, even though it expressed itself in a lighter vein. She would say, "Why not do the thing you find happiness and joy in? Have you not earned the right to adjust yourself joyously, rather than dismally?"

I joined up in February before Pearl Harbor. Two years had brought me to these crossroads. I looked forward keenly to the special grants to leave the post for a trip into town, where familiar experiences awaited me. Dinners were happy events—the game of blind man's buff, eating clock fashion and finding my way through oily dressings on lettuce salads, and meatless days, when I ordered oysters, which were inclined to slink away and hide.

My first steak dinner was on the post, arranged by the Brig. General, and my Case Worker was to show me my A.B.C.'s of how not to handle a knife like a bayonet. At this dinner I sensed something was wrong, as I heard her muffled chuckle coming from across the table. I looked up, somewhat bewildered, and asked, "What's up?" "Well," she said, "you evidently believe in the old adage 'Whole cow or none at all!'" There I had poised on my fork what seemed to be about half a cow. We laughed over this, until she said, "Oh! Oh! again I see trouble ahead!" "Now, what am I doing?" I asked—"Bet I left the spoon in the middle of the saucer again." I had!—Next day I was dining in one of the major spots, hearing lovely music and

singing. After a delicious dinner, I began to feel that here again life was continuing on in somewhat the same way as before Attu—when I was stationed in this city prior to going north. All this was occurring in those first weeks of adjustment.

It was pointed out that as time went on I would begin to observe the public doing some queer things too—equally as funny as I did. It was not all one-sided. A general idea exists in the minds of the public that blind people are not only blind, but deaf and dumb as well,—that unless my arm was held tightly, as though I were some fragile object of art, I would fall down and break into many pieces. The general public is whole-hearted and sympathetic, and, to a certain degree, this is a great morale builder, even though at times some are a little over-solicitous.

At dinner one night, the waitress stood between “C.W.” and me and, turning her back on me, said to “C.W.” “Does he wish any dessert?” “C.W.” leaned, with difficulty, around the waitress and said to me—“Leonard, do you wish dessert?” “No, thank you,” I replied. Then again, with her back toward me, the waitress addressed “C.W.” —“Does he want coffee?”—and, as before, “Leonard do you wish coffee?” “Yes, thank you,” I replied.

Waitress: “Does he wish cream and sugar?” “Leonard will you have cream and sugar?”

Leonard: “Yes, thank you!”

Soon the coffee arrived, and, once again turning her back on me, she said to “C.W.” “Now, how many lumps of sugar does he wish in his coffee?” By this time we both were smothering our keen desire to giggle, but kindly waited until she was gone.

When “C.W.” told me that frequently people would think I was deaf and dumb, as well as blind, I did not realize what she meant—but now I was beginning to comprehend.

One evening, at a large entertainment we attended our entrance could be described as a "forward pass." As we left the hall, through a throng of people, five persons—with the best of intentions to assist me—literally tore us apart as we made our exit. I lost "C.W." completely in the skirmish. She managed, however, to get through to me, just as she was falling down two steps in the entrance. I felt her touch on my arm, and held her up. We reached the street, and, as she straightened up her hat, asked if I was all right. "If only they wouldn't pull at us!" I said. "Yes, the dears—but let's be grateful for the consideration they expressed, for who knows when—just around the corner,—we may need their help." We swung around the block, breathing in the fresh cool air until we felt our freedom of motion return, and were ready for the next adventure.

CHAPTER FIVE

Army Discharge

I said good-bye to my hospital buddies at Letterman, and the doctors and kind nurses who had helped me face this new world those first grim days and weeks. I earnestly tried not to fret and worry over something I could do nothing about, and I realized—as I had been told I would—that my own mental attitude toward my blindness would be an important thing after all. If I faced the sighted world in a disarming manner, others would catch the idea and feel immediately at ease in my presence, and I could show those I came in contact with how to be less cognizant of my plight. I wanted everyone to accept me and my blindness in just the same stride as I accepted it myself.

I left the hospital to board my train for home, and I anticipated this trip with pleasure because already I had had many weeks of adjustment, away from hospital routine, and was not afraid of what I would do when walking, talking, eating and mingling with people. Because of that very early adjustment—even with some patches still on—I had learned to be fairly self-sufficient and at ease. I was given an attendant P.F.C., who was attached to the medical department at the hospital during the time I was there. He was to see me safely home to my mother's house, in Illinois. Of course I was not only eager and excited, but fully prepared in these past seven weeks to leave for home.

Uncle Sam takes good care of his boys, and my trip home was made most comfortable and pleasant, with proper facilities and a good traveling companion. On this train were other casualties, and officers. The days and nights

passed quickly, although the passing scenery meant nothing to me, and during much of the time I slept.

We arrived at my home, and found, naturally, a tender welcome from my mother and the many members of my large family. They were wonderful, and there was much understanding from each one. My homecoming was not sad but a joyous one. Whatever they felt they cleverly concealed, and my mother felt I had not changed too much, which, she later said, helped them to carry on as though nothing had happened to me.

I was meeting the old family friends, school chums, and the few boys who were not off—as I had been—to war. It did not seem to take very much to place me, momentarily, back into my old world, and when mother prepared chicken dinners—which I had so often longed for—I was aware of how lucky I was to have been discharged so soon. Actually, I was dehospitalized and discharged about the end of the seventh week after I was brought to the hospital from battle.

Returning servicemen—long schooled in the virtues of promptness—anticipate and expect quick action when they return for discharge, believing, after physical wounds have healed, they will be freed from hospital wards and all forms of regimentation which would delay their discharge into civil life. There are battle blinded who accept these delays with some measure of grumbling. In these cases, however, morale is lowered to the point where sometimes nothing can reinstate it again.

After a happy return to my loved ones, and the constant necessity of a human guide for every move I made whenever I was in unfamiliar surroundings I began to take stock of my future. I had only been home three weeks when I felt the desire, through a certain restlessness, to be improving my time, and to be getting on with the rehabilitation—which now, I began to realize was only in

its beginning, and must be continued. I was convinced, in my own mind, that my life as a soldier could not be changed in thirteen weeks, even though I was blind, to a life of inactivity of the sort that bore nothing constructive, engaging or active. At this point I left my home for the West again.

I had learned much about the Guide Dog movement for the blind, begun in the United States twenty-five years ago, and for the past ten years successfully established in England, as well as in other countries. Rehabilitation of the blind through guide dogs has proved an undeniable success. I learned in those first weeks how to walk, pacing off in guide dog stride, and knew this was the first step to be taken for a larger field of adventure and freedom.

I cannot stress too strongly the importance of walking the moment one can physically do so. This walking should not be confused with groping—feeling one's way from place to place,—or tracing one's way within known areas. This walking program does not, however, place too much stress on skin sensitivity at this point of adjustment, because it has been known to raise the fatigue rate to such a degree that high tension nervousness undoes, in a reactionary way much of the good held for its system. If a person is not in pain from injury, and can get around hospital wards and runways, he should begin learning balance, orientation and body rhythm, and get mixed up with traffic as often and as soon as he can. It can only be acquired by hours of walking—fast walking. It requires the time and cooperation of sighted persons who know how to aid in this vital routine of walking and is necessary until such time as it is possible to attend one of the recognized guide dog schools, where the rehabilitation of the blind student is continued, the training of dogs is in progress, and the coordination of student and dog is accomplished.

It is now possible for military and civilian persons alike to obtain a guide dog free—if they feel the need or desire for one. The only requirement is the desire and willingness on the part of the student, to give the necessary time at such a school (usually one month).

My first feeling that perhaps all this was not so bad as I had thought, came before I left the hospital, when I was able each day to carry on my fast walking routine. For me, the breezes still touched my face gently, and bird sounds were calling me out of doors. "C.W." once asked me if I heard a bird's note. I replied, "Not one, but hundreds of them." We walked and talked, those first weeks, of many things, while she played the part of an imaginary Guide Dog—"Juno"—teaching me to properly cross the curbs and intersections as I would have to do if I owned a guide dog. Without realizing it, she was leading me in thought and action back into activity—so normal to all human beings who walk upright and on two legs, and with brisk speed. She asked me often if I loved dogs. She held out to me the suggestion and promise of going wherever I wished to go, and doing what, perchance, I might secretly wish to do—without a human guide to know my every act, my business or my innermost desires. I was active enough to realize how valuable privacy, of a personal sort, is. I had not had this since I was blinded. The thought of being tied, as on a leash, to some person whose views and thoughts I did not share, would soon pall on me. With a dog I would have all these many freedoms, and more—speed and activity, together with the safest guide of all to protect my every step. One cannot leave the drill field, the long marches in uniform, and actual battle, to easily accept, in thirty to ninety days, a snail's pace, groping for each well-placed step.

From that first day of this work, I realized there would be many challenges set for me. I was told, however, this was so even in what used to be my sighted world, and that



SERGEANT FOULK BEFORE BATTLE OF ATTU AND
PRIOR TO BLINDNESS

nothing had been accomplished but by concerted action, practice and sticking to the thing until I got there. Just as much as that was true in my sighted world, it was even more so now, and I was told frankly I would bump my body from head to toe, many times, and would seem to find obstacles awaiting me around every corner, unless I learned how to avoid them. However, this was no reasonable excuse for becoming fearful and faltering. It amused me no little when I was assured it wouldn't hurt very much more if I bumped into something with my "chin up" and shoulders back than if I plunged headlong into it, groping and with "chin down." With this admonition "C.W." cautioned me not to take this too seriously, since I might get the idea that promiscuous bumping into door posts or hazards was according to the most approved methods of blind conduct. To the contrary, I was warned to avoid obstructions in my path by using the technique I had already learned about such things. It was not necessary to injure myself, blind, any more than when sighted. The following corroborating statement was read to me—from an article by Charles Magee Adams: "The sightless live at a higher nervous tension than the seeing. Sensory deficiency keeps attention at concert pitch. Everything demands greater concentration. Even personal safety calls for eternal vigilance."

By this system of deduction I was becoming fairly convinced that I need not turn from my youthful "Thumper" or "Peter Rabbit" personality into a slow-going turtle, but could find myself again—just as before this thing came along—a boy going places with his dog.

CHAPTER SIX

I Leave for My Dog

One week passed quickly after I returned from Illinois, and my first visit home, to enter the school to get my dog. During that week I greeted the new friends made in the West, friends whom I associated with my first days of blindness. During those days, I tried, in a well designed way, to let the dullness and weight of my blindness give way to sheer pleasure, of my own choosing.

This week was spent just in pleasure—tossing off care, spending much time in nonsense and laughter, in a sort of joyous abandon, come-what-may, manner. This was not difficult for me to do, because it is my second nature. I had never sought out the grim side of life when sighted, and found it very easy to stay in a more or less “play thought” at this time. I was constantly urged not to change my personality in any way, but to observe the best qualities I possessed and build on them toward a better way, a freer and broader vision, without fear and limitation.

Here, again, was my adjustment continuing. It was just what the word implied—adjusting my mind and body to the new circumstance of darkness, like my favorite song—it began to be “Open Road” and I must go on!

On the seventh day of my return, the station wagon arrived, and I left for the Guide Dog school, which is situated in the beautiful foothills of Santa Clara Valley. My trainer, who called for me, discussed many things, and we talked, as we drove to the school, about “dogs” and the people who have need for these dogs. A new language was sounding in my ears. Here again it seemed so much a part of my world, when, as a boy, I always had a dog.

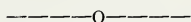
This "dog" subject was already in my heart, and I began to think of my new possession as something I could love, and touch, and feel. My dog would also be a sort of center for my affections, and I admit, even with all the courage I thought I had, there was still a longing to have someone or something beside me, to help in this space that had no corners nor dimensions. I would not be lonely, but would become a part of a unit. I had been told much about this "man-dog" unit and what it meant. My dog would also give me a responsibility—something to think about outside of myself—and help to take me beyond the limits of my blindness.

A dog must be so carefully trained that a person's life can be trusted to her. This is not guess work. It is actual. The first idea of the guide dog movement was developed in Switzerland, after World War I. It was brought to this country by a far-seeing woman, Mrs. Dorothy Harrison Eustice, who was convinced a proper coordination could be made between a blind man and a dog. She learned that dogs could use their eyes for the blind to guide and guard their steps. In due time she gathered about her a group of interested people, and started the movement in the United States. She founded the first school for that purpose in this country. Other schools came into being in other sections of the country.

Of course, those who understand this type of blind aid are aware that there are many blind persons who do not like dogs, or who do not understand dogs, and, perchance, may be cruel to dogs. There is still another group for whom, due to physical handicaps, dogs would not even be practical. In my case, just as in the case of many soldiers who have been supplied with artificial limbs at the earliest possible moment in order that they may be back on their feet rapidly, I was eager to try this faster mode of locomotion, since I had never really accepted any-

thing that meant slowing down. Today there are some "group" rehabilitation workers who do not use dogs themselves, and therefore do not place the guide dog in the honor role to which it is entitled. On the other hand, the possession of a guide dog does not restrict the blind to its exclusive use. If at any time a blind person wishes to go forth on the arm of a friend or relative—to concerts or any other form of social activity—he may do so without harm to himself or his dog. But best of all, he may go anywhere, any time with his dog. These dogs love to travel—in trains, planes, buses, taxicabs and cars—and their trained behavior sets an admirable example to all fellow travelers, in good manners and proper traveling etiquette.

The training of these dogs, and the coordination of the blind with them, within a well-directed school, is still an individual work, and, like many fine crafts, cannot be done in mass production. This, again, is another reason why it is such a great privilege to be one of those who may possess a dog.



We arrived at the school—and it was about dinner time. I must confess the word "school" did not intrigue me much, and, though I wanted my dog, the idea of regimentation once again presented itself. If only I could get my dog without going to school for it—that would appeal to me much more. However, here I was at a school, and, once more, among strangers.

I was shown to my room, and there I met my roommate. He had arrived that day also, having come a great distance too—but not as far as I had, by any means. There wasn't anything gloomy or sad about this fellow, and I soon discovered he was not exactly a new recruit in the guide dog army—as I was. He was a few years my junior, and had been sightless nearly all his life. There seemed to be very little—in the life of a blind boy—he had not en-



SERGEANT FOULK, LEFT, (2½ MONTHS AFTER BLIND-
NESS) AND HIS ROOMMATE

countered, and though he did not have much to say that first meeting, I soon sensed he knew the ropes. It wasn't long before I learned he was there to get his second dog, and then I knew much better why he could take things so easily in his stride. It was all strangely new to me, but somehow this fellow had such a matter-of-fact attitude about everything, that I began to feel more at ease and to catch on to the business of getting a guide dog. He had been with various groups for the blind, but he told me this place was not like any he had ever encountered before. We both felt it was more like a home, and began to feel at home. Getting a dog was no problem for him, because his former experience, in an eastern school—when getting his first dog—was a very pleasant one. He had his first dog eight years, when it died from natural causes. He told me how depressed he felt when she died, and also of the long hours of unbearable waiting for some human guide to help him—something he had almost forgotten in those eight years. It seemed doubly unbearable, he said, because he had known—for all those years—what it was to have freedom and companionship. He was not in the habit of waiting endless hours—he felt a prisoner, unable to come and go at ease as he had done—his plans were made at the convenience of others, not on his own time. He tried to tell me that I, perhaps, did not fully appreciate what it meant to wait long intervals for something to happen, since I had not been blind long enough to know the terror of feeling you could not get about freely; and if you did, you were not quite certain in your mind just how much you might be inconveniencing someone who must act as your guide. He told me of a time when a human guide walked him in front of a car, and they both suffered as a result. He assured me that at no time did his dog ever walk him into obstructions, or bump him into pedestrian traffic, as sighted guides had done—mentioning, in parti-

cular, the smoothness with which he walked beside the even and protecting step of his dog. She never did the unexpected, as human guides would, and he assured me the best thing about it was the privacy this method of getting about had in its favor as against all others. In fact, he reminded me there were only three ways for a blind man to get about:—(a) with a cane, poking into space in a more or less uncertain and faltering way as he steps out; (b) on the arm of someone; or, (c) with a leader or guide dog. He had tried them all, and that was why he was back for his second dog.

By this time we were getting better acquainted, and, realizing we would have a month to talk it over in, voted on getting an early night's rest this first night. It had been a day no little taxing to the mind, and I was glad to "turn in" for the night, though it all seemed exciting and new.

Next morning, at 8:30 (which was Monday), the instructor welcomed us to the school, officially, and our work began. He started out with a talk which lasted a good three quarters of an hour. It was extremely interesting. He said: "This first lecture, of necessity, will be considerably longer than your subsequent lectures, so we will give you a rest period today before going on with our talk, in which we will outline our course for the next four weeks." He continued, "Twenty-five years have proven that it is possible to train dogs to act as guides for the sightless, and it is possible to teach the sightless to use such dogs. Our course is one of theory and practice. The theory will be given in lectures, and the practice will be the daily use of your dogs on the street. The theory and practice are coordinated at about the same speed. In this way we will proceed, as in all other studies, easy things first, and the more difficult toward the end of your class instruction. We will see that you receive a full ground

work in the use of your guide dog by the end of the four weeks course here at the school."

Our next lecture, entitled "Meeting your Dog," somewhat amused me, though I soon saw it was not meant to be facetious. The instructor began as follows: "'Meeting your Dog.' You may have thought quite a little about the time you are to meet your dog, and, consequently, almost believe you know her, and you are prepared to become friends at once. What you may not have taken into consideration is,—that the dog has not thought of this change in her life. She is not anticipating your coming, and, if she could talk, she would probably tell you she has no special interest in you, or desire to meet you." This made me feel a little unimportant, because, after all, I supposed, secretly, I was to be her man and there could be no doubt in her mind about this. It was further explained to us that we would have to wait for a few days before we would receive our finally selected dog. This was news to me, but, when it was pointed out that dogs are like people—and the trick was in receiving the right dog—I quickly understood. This was done by the process of elimination, whereby the natures of "man and beast" were studied, to determine the most harmonious coordination. In other words, our personalities must blend. Meantime, we practiced on another dog for our first exercises. Also, dogs are selected a little on the order of selecting a suit of clothes—the right size for the right student. My "buddy" was 6 feet 2 inches, and he was "fitted" to the largest sized dog in the kennel, whereas I, not being as tall, received a dog of lesser size. The girls usually receive average sized dogs.

The practice of obedience tests, and street routine became our daily life, and each day we learned a little more about this coordination of dog and man. These exercises are exacting in terms of patience and repetition, although simple little exercises in the main. Practicing on some of



BEST PAL — "BLONDIE"

the simple walking exercises prior to the student's arrival at the school, is an added advantage and greatly aids in the establishment of safety and confidence in the blind student's mind. The following weeks are composed of nothing but hundreds of little details; therefore, it is vitally important that not one little detail escapes, or is forgotten. Our mistakes are many, of course, but we are kindly told that it is no sign of mental weakness to ask over and over again any questions that do not seem clear to us. If I should forget and drop my head forward, instantly the command came,—“chin up!” If my hand wasn't just right, it would be placed in its proper position on the harness handle. I was ordered many times to use proper force and inflection in my voice when giving my dog commands, thus eliminating a “dim out” voice, so common to newly blinded. My dog must hear my commands clearly amid the din of street noises and traffic, as well as see my “hand” commands.

If there is any magic in the fine work which these dogs are doing, it is not of the voodoo type, but rather, hard work,—miles of walking,—patience,—and the willingness to learn.

After a week's time I began to realize that the actual training of the dogs is the least of their work at the school, and I learned, with surprise, of the endless detail, along the lines of rehabilitation, included in all of it. Even though I had not spent days on end sitting alone—as many blind have done, and some of them over a period of many years—still I felt the value, here and now, of what this “dog-man” activity was to mean, with future possibilities unfolding before my very eyes. I expressed the idea to my roommate, that, aside from all else, my dog was even then filling my need for a pal. He assured me the time would come when I would not say “best pal in the world,” but,—“best pal period!”

One morning our instructor gave the usual command, "Let's go!" but added, "Today you're on your own. Work accurately, and meet me back here at the car." The trip went well, and I was gaining my freedom by leaps and bounds. However, we had one good laugh this day, as usual. As I neared the end of my first block, on the return trip, my dog suddenly backed up, and there I stood alone (I thought) with only the empty harness in my hand. I had failed to put the bar of the buckle into the hole of the strap when placing the harness upon her. As long as the tension was on the harness, all went well, but the moment the dog checked, I pulled the harness off over her head. Calling her to my side, I fastened the harness properly, and finished the route.

For some time it was not clear to me why the instructor repeatedly asked if I did not feel a little fearful on this first trip alone. I would answer in the negative each time he asked me. I told him I was not afraid because I felt such a thrill when the dog stopped at the curb the first time and I got the message from her that she certainly knew her business. From then on it was only the simple matter of doing my part, because I could tell the dog knew hers. The instructor explained that few ever make the initial trip alone without some qualms about it. He said that in some two hundred cases he had handled, only one other boy had felt the same as I did. He was a twenty-three year old boy who had been shot much the same as I had been, but while deer hunting. He explained that this boy—like myself—had not yet had time to lose much confidence in himself. I was told many times by my trainer that the best practice in dealing with the newly blinded is the type of adjustment I was asked to do those first weeks of fast, free walking, while my bandages were still on. I had never really become "chair ridden," and had actually only been off my feet but two weeks.



SERGEANT FOULK AND HIS GUIDE DOG "BLONDIE"

At this point in the training, I became the master of my dog "Blondie." Up until now I was using my practice dog. If I spoiled her, during my first days of awkward training, she would remain behind for correction. I was now given the lovely "Blondie," who was to be mine. "Blondie" was to have been mine all the time, but I was not informed of this. I grew attached to my practice dog, but now, by right of possession, I felt close to this dog that was to be my very own. "Blondie" became my roommate, and, with my buddy, we both had our final dogs—each at our own bedposts, where we could reach out and pet them whenever we desired. We began to work in the larger cities where there were revolving doors to conquer—elevators, and up and down long flights of steps. In short, any place we might wish to go. Hazards and obstacles were especially picked out for us, and my "Blondie" knew how to negotiate them all.

Finally came the day of our last lecture. The statements our instructor made to us then were very understandable. We had grasped the language of guide dog coordination, and knew much more of what it was all about. He said: "When you arrived here we told you the work would not be too difficult. I believe you have verified that statement for yourselves. At the same time, we told you the result would be well worth while and that you would never regret it. I believe also you are commencing to realize that too. I may add—your appreciation and your realization of what your dog can do for you is now but a shaft of light in the morning. As you go on, and as you come to a closer understanding of your dog, and your dog comes closer to you, then you will gradually come out into the full sunlight of an independent life. That is what you came here to attain. We wish you success in all you do, and the full joy of what your dogs can do to help you toward a successful goal. Remember that our interest in

you never ceases. We hope to keep in touch with you and your dog always, and to have you visit us whenever you can."

It was time to leave this pleasant home for new fields to conquer, and, even though we had enjoyed the full month of training we were eager to leave and try our new freedom in the outside world.

When the station wagon left with me and my "Blondie," I realized—as we turned out of the gate away from this harmoniously happy home—that this time I was not leaving for a practice trip—I was actually leaving with a greater knowledge of what blindness is going to mean to me. As they called to me, I knew full well the truth of their words: "Good-bye Sgt. Foulk, and Good Luck! Now you are on your own."*

*The name of the school referred to in this chapter is: GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND INC., Los Gatos, California. This school is not affiliated with any other organization for the Blind and is a non-profit organization. Dogs are given to worthy applicants passed by the Board, for the sum of one dollar each which includes one month's room and board at the school.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Recapitulation and "The Open Road"

This job of blindness presents an individual problem. I did not know any part of the 300,000 civilian blind in the United States, of which I was to become a member as soon as I removed my army uniform. Thirty thousand people lose their sight each year.* I did know the kind of men the war blinded were because they were my comrades. Their natures and dispositions, their likes and dislikes, their desires and their dreams were the same as before that shell or shot put them into this endless darkness. As men we haven't changed a bit, and our blindness does not make us morbid sissies overnight.

What there is about blindness to frequently cause those who come in contact with us to want to decide our futures for us, I do not know. The desire to engineer us around is something I have never been able to understand! It is as though we had lost our individuality and intelligence along with our sight.

Any methods for rehabilitating the blind—unless carefully worked out and individually presented to us, in cooperation with our individual desires—will turn out to be as useless as the Dodo Bird. There are many reasons why we will not accept that which may even be wise for us. It is even now being proved in some cases that the newly blinded are not too ready—in the very early beginning of their darkness—to study such things as will make him a "model" blind man. This perfection is often of no interest to him until long after he has gone places on his

*Figures given by *New York World Telegram*, Feb. 19, 1945 by Frederick Woltman.

own, and has returned to his old world first—even though without sight. It is believed by some authorities that the newly blinded should have the right to choose whether his freedom, and study, should be obtained within or outside of regimentation. Blindness is not acceptable to any human being. Inwardly we rebel against it, and outwardly we may appear to be stubborn, but we are only beginning another battle which will be, for us, life long, and we falter—mentally. We were “stepped up” into war efficiency of a very high order. Any readjustment program for blind veterans now must be of a highly intelligent nature. It cannot be “talked down” to us. It must be speeded up to the concert pitch to which we were trained prior to our blindness. We want activity of the progressive sort in our blind rehabilitation, just as we saw action in the ice and snow of the Arctic, the quagmire and pestilence of the island swamps, the heat of the desert sands, or the beach-heads on foreign shores. Some of the vocational training of the past will not do for us. Consider us before the war, as farmers, aviators, engineers, college graduates, men with families, or on the threshold of the same, and then if we are to be adjusted again—to our old world—a wide program is necessary for us. This may not be within the confines of some vocational “set up.” Most of us do not like regimented instruction. It would seem that if it could be understood that the greatest morale builder of all is to put men back on their feet and into circulation at the fastest possible moment, that ways and means should be devised whereby guide dogs could be introduced as additional aids to morale; and that boys who are even now calling for dogs in their first throes of blind adjustment, be permitted to get them. There is a program now being conducted in the American Air Force Convalescent Center and Regional Station Hospital at Pawling, New York, under which disabled veterans (mostly psychiatric cases

NOT BLIND) are given dogs for pets as a rehabilitation measure. Col. Hobarth H. Todd is in charge of this hospital and under his auspices over 200 pure-bred dogs have been given already to World War II casualties. This program has proven successful because the medical staff finds that the dogs have given the boys a new interest in life and that they have a definite therapeutic effect which helps in a successful adjustment and rehabilitation. It is not difficult to see in the case of a newly blinded veteran what a combination of needs the guide dog fulfills when used not as a therapeutic measure but as eyes for the blind. The human guide by his side—personalities hitherto unknown to him—may not always make the best morale builders. The first days, weeks and months of blindness are by far the most important. Resentments caused by early personal approach, and daily regimentation in instruction, can, in years to come, prove fatal—at times breaking down an otherwise fine spirit.

We hear, in our days of convalescence, of how we should be "rehabilitated," but the programs for the same do not seem to take into account the things that strike us as important. As we lie there thinking about these things, behind our bands of darkness, we contemplate that which will be necessary for us to carry on. First—what we want to do even for the first year of our dark adjustment. This is so important to us, because the adjustment is so great. Just how great, individually, to each one of us is better answered by ourselves. Our second question is: Where do we wish to be when the re-education is to take place? For most of us that answer will be—in the outside world. We have homes to return to in cities and towns. We long to do the things we dreamed we would as soon as our war jobs were over. We have plans because we are young, and we are men. We know other lives are affected by our blindness, which we must also help to adjust. Our confusion

is so great that we may not know immediately the plans we wish to form in so short a time. Some of us have been so torn in trying to figure the thing out that all we ask is time to decide for ourselves, our course.

Many, acting in this capacity, have proven themselves as fitted to rehabilitate the newly war blinded. The job of remaking a life from light to darkness is so delicate an operation, and so confusing a process, during the first weeks, months, and year, that all sighted or blind inexperienced persons should hesitate and first consider well the importance of the kind of suggestions, opinions and plans they would try to promulgate upon those so recently robbed and shocked. This type of war rehabilitation is not a "job" but a sacred trust.

My hope is that not all the war blind casualties will be cast into a group lot, to be worked on or told what is best for them by an organized system of blind education. These classifications often tend to plunge the newly blinded deeper into despair, instead of lifting these men into freedom of mind and body.

We are soldiers all! We are soldiers still! Inactivity, we also know, is worse and can be more deadly than blindness—just as lying in one's bed for months on end, waiting for wounds to heal—as many of the other war wounded have to do. We all have much time to think it over. We know pretty much what it is all about. The blind do not ask for more privileges than our same per cent disability of the "sighted wounded." We do ask, however, for the right to receive training, or, if we choose, our further education—whether it be vocational or non-vocational—where we want it. We ask that it be given to us according to our own wishes and desires, within, of course, the proper limits of Government appropriations. Some men, returning blinded from battle fronts, will prefer to go without these things rather than be regimented or "grouped"

into it; in which case their discharge becomes far more important to them than their so-called reconstruction. Their personal wishes should be given consideration by a board not so regimentally minded perhaps, as schooled in the understanding of the needs and individual wishes of the veterans.

Blind segregation held no inspiration to me. It would come to my ears often through one suggestion or another, that blind segregation went hand in hand with turning out models of blind men. I refer here only to the period after one has reached his maximum hospitalization improvement. Suggestion of blind segregation comes (as a shock) in the guise of good,—to the man recently left without sight. Here, exactly,—is the point of departure where a blind veteran should be allowed his own preference in his own future re-education.

Anything that retards or delays the personal desires and plans of the wounded after their maximum cure is effected subtly becomes reactionary and force in the matter may leave its mark later on in life. Resentment always does. Pensions are thereby delayed,—often for many months and this fact is not to be overlooked when considering the frequent restless reactions of some war blinded veterans,—prior to discharge.

Following is a list which shows a wide field of activity and endeavor the blind have been successful in:

AGRICULTURE

Farmer
Dairy Farmer
Truck Farmer
Poultry Farmer
Apiarist

TRANSPORTATION AND
COMMUNICATION

Manager, trucking business
Telephone operator, PBX

TRADE

Merchandise market
Commercial traveler
Coffee taster
Insurance agent
Manager, employment agency
Executive (business)
Real Estate dealer

PROFESSIONS

Entertainer (musical)

Journalist
 Editor
 Clergyman
 College professor
 Lawyer
 Composer (music)
 Organist
 Pianist
 Singer
 Music teacher
 Musical director
 Bandmaster
 Commercial player (theater)
 Teacher, school for the seeing
 Teacher, school for the blind
 Librarians (Dept. for the blind)
 Chiropractor
 Masseur
 Home teacher
 Social worker

RETAIL DEALERS

Book dealer
 Show merchant
 Standkeeper, news and con-
 fectionery
 Clothing, storekeeper
 Coal, wood and ice dealer
 Drygoods dealer
 Grocer
 Furniture dealer
 Fruit dealer
 Hardware dealer
 Dealer in musical instruments
 Produce dealer
 Stationery dealer
 Salesman
 Office supply business

CLERICAL OCCUPATIONS

Publicity agent

Advertising
 General Clerical Worker
 Dictaphone operator
 Typist
 Stenographer

FACTORY OCCUPATIONS

Assembly work (automobiles,
 nuts, bolts, locks, vacuum
 cleaners, telephones, elec-
 tric specialties)
 Inspecting (auto axles, auto
 valves, shoes, camera parts)
 Stuffing upholstery
 Buffing (metal)
 Drill-press operation
 Punch-press operating
 Packing (needles, cans, candy,
 cards, novelties)
 Core making (foundry)
 Riveting, safety razors
 Racking, window pulleys
 Stringing jewelry
 Washing (machine parts)
 Armature winding
 Screw winding
 Screw setting (furniture)
 Crating veneers
 Foreman, dye-room
 Inverting bags
 Shaping gloves
 Sorting show findings
 Folding boxes
 Box folder
 Stoning dates
 Building fields for sweepers
 Repairing bottle crates
 Operating milling machines
 Grinding
 Broaching and reaming
 Piano tuner

My Case Worker told me she believed, from her own

observation, it was much too soon to begin preaching at the bedside—by vocational and occupational trainers—that the thing to do is to immediately start training for the purpose of getting a “job.” Only through activity (especially in cases where other disability wounds have healed, leaving nothing but the loss of vision), will the desire be created to carry on in the business world.

The first thing a blind man thinks—rightly or wrongly—is, “What is to be exacted of me—have I not already done a good job, which, with its resultant ‘pay off’ in wounds, would entitle me to a little peace and quiet, just to think it over for a while?” We are accused of just wanting to take it “sitting down,” or indulge in ease for the rest of our lives—possibly on our pensions.

Over-enthusiastic rehabilitation groups, or single case workers, can plant, at a wrong moment, and by an un-intelligent approach, the most useless suggestions from the standpoint of casualty morale. Some persons seem too free to suggest what is good for the returning war blind. During the first days of disability many blinded are indifferent and silent at times—and this is true of other war wounded boys who have returned from battles with their sight, but badly the worse for wear.

Bureaus, vocational centers and routine regimentation may not meet the approval of all these blind casualties, with their many complex reactions to the new conditions in which they find themselves, and the new mode of existence which many of them will have to face. Such a course of procedure could easily lead to despondency, and might even result in psychopathic cases, unnecessarily. Orientors with some special training, but no aptitude for it, would be better left out of the picture completely. A wrong word spoken at a wrong time can do endless harm. Mass production training of “orientors” to handle the blind cannot possibly fill the bill. Synthetic morale building often de-



PRESENTATION OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL AT PRESIDIO,
SAN FRANCISCO, DECEMBER, 1944

lays that important time when facts must be faced—as they surely will be—not as teachers suggest they will be.

Often during those first grotesque days we become (secretly) resentful at the voice by our bedside trying to whip us into future action of one kind or another. Suggestions for new endeavor of this sort come at a time when we are mentally crushed, and it seems more than we can endure.

We want at the proper time, when our minds have cleared sufficiently to study or work, to be given the choice for advancement along any line we choose, or schools of preference in the outside world.

In the case of blindness, only through early—and even bedside—activity of the kind that will make us want to leave our beds and go into the outside world again, can the desire be cultivated to return to work, and such work as will be of commercial value. Setting ourselves up in business or finding jobs is mighty important to us.

Given proper time to visualize and carefully analyze our individual needs, we will still give a good account of ourselves as soldiers, and we will ask for nothing but what is proper and fitting for us to have. We feel we have no time to lose. Our anxiety is to live—as nearly as we once did—in what is “still (our) world.”

We will all, very soon I am sure, want to fill our time constructively and successfully, mentally, morally and financially.

The subject of returning to our homes, parents, relatives and loved ones is very simple, as I see it. I found no such difficulty as is expressed in reports, of the dread boys have of returning to the homes they left to fight for. Doubtless, some parents should be helped to understand the problems of their returning sons, and thus in a sense be prepared for the many little difficulties which will confront them from time to time, but in my case the idea



"BLONDIE" IS ASKED TO POSE

was first presented by letter. It was stressed, to make my return a joyous occasion, and to observe the attitude I myself maintained and follow it. I was told, as I boarded the train, "Now remember, your courage will be their courage, and you can place them at ease quickly. The job is yours—not theirs—in getting over to them the fine adjustments you yourself have made."

It is still my belief that eventually many of the returned veterans will appreciate the opportunity of learning, as have so many other blinded—after years of nervous energy expended in trying to go places—that the guide dog actually steps up activity, relieves nervous tension and sets a fast pace; as well as the fact that it is a truly reliable guard for his steps—when and where it is needed—in the noisy streets where traffic never annoys or confuses the even pacing step of a well-trained guide dog and his properly coordinated master. Safety is almost one of the first requisites in the life of a blind person, with independence following as a close second. It eventually becomes embarrassing to a self-respecting person to continually ask help in unfamiliar traffic and streets.

Dogs have been proved over a period of 25 years. There are few systems today for the safe step of the blind, where speeded-up traffic in a modern age demands alertness every split second, to compare with the comfort and harmony to be derived from this man-dog unit. There is much in other systems which is still experimental, and only time will prove their adequacy and value.

It is unfortunate, however, that numbers of so-called orientators, rehabilitation groups and some psychiatrists have been turned loose upon the newly blinded—almost indiscriminately. Many "adjusters" believe that experience as Social Workers is sufficient to enable them to enter this field of activity,—with scarcely any, or no knowledge whatsoever about the blind. Some of the finest adjustments

of the newly blind have been made by blind who did the job themselves, without the aid of the above-named.

If all sighted persons who believe they understand the psychology of the blind, were forced to go behind a blindfold for a period of one month before being accredited as ready to practice on the blind, many acts now unthinkingly—and sometimes stupidly—inflicted upon a newly blinded person, would never have to be tolerated or endured. This blindfold technique would mean living, dressing, eating and meeting all the problems of everyday life, for one month, in almost total darkness,—as the blind have to do. All qualified dog trainers are required to undergo this blindfold test (of one month) before they are considered capable of coordinating a guide dog and a blind student in the use of a guide dog. This fine routine was established by the pioneers in this work, who considered it an essential and important factor in the Guide Dog Movement,—and certainly necessary to a full understanding and education of any person learning to train guide dogs, or in dealing with the blind who wish to use them. In no other way can any sighted person learn just what blindness is like.

If a dog and trainer unit must pass this blindfold test, in order to prove worthy of the task set before them both, how much more important it is that single adjusters and rehabilitation workers at least know, through practice and by this useful routine, some of the many trials and handicaps by which the blind are confronted in their daily lives. There are high standards of Guide Dog training already established, perfected and in operation. The guide dog movement has been imposed upon by some groups and single trainers who are not regulated or required to adhere strictly to these standards. Some for commercial reasons are even turning out badly trained guide dogs indiscriminately.

It is too bad that prejudice against the use of the guide dog has been allowed to enter into the minds of many of the newly war blinded casualties. It is the sincere opinion of a great many users of guide dogs that all types of blind rehabilitation (or re-education) would be materially aided in the very beginning of sightlessness by the security of a guide dog and in place of being a deterrent in the selective kinds of adjustment the dog would greatly speed up the prescribed program of any newly blinded person physically able to use one.

In many cases, it is true, the bravest of them all are the men who return disfigured. They do not wish to inflict themselves upon wives and sweethearts, and, beyond a question, such cases and many other types of casualty require special handling. Soldiers do not cry—they don't feel that way about it. We do not, however, belittle the loving expressions of friends and relatives upon our return, because we know that during our absence they too have suffered daily, wondering where and how we are. The return to their loving care often satisfies both them and us, and, I repeat, if we ask them in our letters before we reach home, to disregard our injuries and help us to pick up where we left off, they will do all in their power to accede to our wishes. Some families and parents may disregard these requests, but most parents were strong and brave when they said good-bye to us, and can be depended upon to greet us in the true American tradition.

I have met others—from Navy, Marines and Army—returned from World War II blinded, as I am, and I have found that the one thing uppermost in their minds was to get home. They fretted under continued regimentation, and association with some of the workers who did not themselves know what it was all about, who never had been in a foxhole, and who often, on the one hand, veered to saccharine sweetness, and on the other tried to con-

tinue G.I. with us. No soldier desires or expects coddling, nor are they disappointed when they do not get it. The blind soldier can easily detect any attempts made to "toughen" him to the situation. Most of the wounded returned veterans are through with regimentation as soon as it is clear to them they are no longer physically fit for duty.

In the case of war veterans, it is to be expected that there will be a certain restlessness at times. But I can never be grateful enough for having been released the moment my physical wounds had healed and I was de-hospitalized. This was in the seventh week of my blindness, and, while the bands of darkness could not be unfettered, I could be. Blind as I was, I irked at the thought of remaining an hour longer than it took to say good-bye to my buddies, the doctors and nurses, and to return to my home.

Given the proper freedom and time to visualize our needs and desires in our own individual spheres, away from the maelstrom of war and everything that may have caused our disabilities, "We shall also serve" in "Still (Our) World."

THE END

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